



# Boots on the Ground by Dusk: My Tribute to Pat Tillman

*Mary Tillman, Narda Zacchino*

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On April 22, 2004, Lieutenant David Uthlaut received orders from Khost, Afghanistan, that his platoon was to leave the town of Magarah and "have boots on the ground before dark" in Manah, a small village on the border of Pakistan. It was an order the young lieutenant protested vehemently, but the commanders at the Tactical Command Center disregarded his objections. Uthlaut split his platoon into two serials, with serial one traveling northwest to Manah and serial two towing a broken Humvee north toward the Khost highway. By nightfall, Uthlaut and his radio operator were seriously wounded, and an Afghan militia soldier and a U.S. soldier were dead. The American soldier was my son, Pat Tillman.

The Tillman family was originally informed that Pat, who had given up a professional football career to serve his country, had been shot in the head while getting out of a vehicle. At his memorial service twelve days later, they were told that he was killed while running up a hill in pursuit of the enemy. He was awarded a Silver Star for his courageous actions. A month and two days after his death, the family learned that Pat had been shot three times in the head by his own troops in a "friendly fire" incident. Seven months after Pat's death, the Tillmans requested an investigation.

*Boots on the Ground by Dusk* is a chronicle of their efforts to ascertain the true circumstances of Pat's death and the reasons why the Army gave the family and the public a false story. Woven into the account are valuable and respectful memories of Pat Tillman as a son, brother, husband, friend, and teammate, in the hope that the reader will better comprehend what is really lost when our sons and daughters are killed or maimed in war.

In the course of three and a half years, there have been six investigations, several inquiries, and two Congressional hearings. The Tillmans are still awaiting an outcome.

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